



OESNEWS

Governor's Office of Emergency Services

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CONTACTS: Melanie Bedwell, 916-845-8456

Greg Renick, 916-502-7605

Test of Tsunami Warning System in Humboldt County Successful

EUREKA, CA – Officials from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES), the Humboldt County Office of Emergency Services, and the National Weather Service (NWS) are evaluating the success of today's first-ever "live" tsunami warning test that was transmitted over the Emergency Alert System (EAS).

The test, which began at 10:15 a.m., marked the first time the actual, or "live", tsunami code was used during a test in the 48 contiguous states. The test began with EAS activation and transmission of the test message via local radio and television stations, as well as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Weather Radio system. Initial results indicate that there were no unanticipated technology issues, and that no emergency 9-1-1 calls were made to safety answering points.

"Although the test is still being assessed, I'm confident that the information we glean from this exercise and the public feedback will help us save lives and reduce injuries when a real tsunami or other emergency occurs," said OES Director Henry Renteria.

Evaluation of the test will include analysis of the NWS tsunami activation sequence, how well television and radio stations received the EAS messages and how well each station was able to re-transmit the message without issue, and the public's response to the exercise. Initial public response has been positive, based on feedback received through the NOAA survey Web site: <http://www.weather.gov/tsunamitest.php>. Cable television did not participate in today's exercise due to technical issues that are being resolved; however, those stations would have been able to carry a real warning without issue.

Humboldt County residents who listened to the radio or television during the test heard the standard alert tone before the test message. The audio message stated that a test was being conducted, but the text crawl at the bottom of TV screens did not include the word "test." To avoid confusion for hearing-impaired populations,

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advance coordination was made to include an open-captioned Public Service Announcement just before the test, plus an additional crawler was generated at the top of the TV screen during the test.

An extensive public education and outreach campaign has been conducted by local, state and federal officials for the past several weeks that, in addition to alerting statewide news media, included flyers, public service announcements, the use of Caltrans highway message boards, and coordination with organizations that serve disabled populations, as well as non-English speakers. The public was informed that sirens would not be heard during today's test, but an internal bench test indicated that the siren signal operated properly. A public hotline was also established to answer questions and address any concerns stemming from the test. It also informed people that the test would occur, that there was no tsunami emergency, and that there was no need to evacuate.

Humboldt County is one of the most tsunami-aware communities in the United States, and has a strong relationship with OES, the County Office of Emergency Services and the NWS. It was selected for the pilot test because the radio transmitters used to send information via NOAA Weather Radio in the region have minimal spill over into neighboring counties.

Residents of Humboldt County can continue to provide feedback about the test by linking on to the National Weather Service's Web page at <http://www.weather.gov/tsunamitest.php> and completing the survey.

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The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinates overall state agency response to major disasters in support of local government. OES maintains the State Emergency Plan, which outlines the organizational structure for state management of the response to natural and manmade disasters. OES assists local governments and other state agencies in developing their own emergency preparedness and response plans in accordance with the Standardized Emergency Management System and the State Emergency Plan.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the plant it observes, predicts and protects.